



# The Ghost Writer

OCTOBER, 2009

NEWSLETTER of the Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, "Home of the Ghost Orchid"

## EVENTS

### GUIDED SWAMP WALKS

1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday  
4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday

starting November 14 through April  
Cost: \$50 (\$40 member), \$15 child  
**Reservations Required.**  
Phone (239) 695-1023 or email  
[islandgirlm@msn.com](mailto:islandgirlm@msn.com)

### GUIDED CANOE TRIPS

1<sup>st</sup> Saturday

Cost: \$50 (\$40 member), \$15 child  
**Reservations Required.**  
Phone (239) 695-1023 or email  
[islandgirlm@msn.com](mailto:islandgirlm@msn.com)

### VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday  
See page 2 for details.

### BOARD MEETINGS

Sunday, November 8, 10:30 a.m.  
Sunday, December 13, 2:00 p.m.  
Port of the Islands  
See page 4.

### WELCOME BACK DINNER

Sunday, December 13, 6:00 p.m.  
Port of the Islands  
For info, phone (239) 695-1023

**Grand Opening of Marsh Trail**  
**Ten Thousand Islands Refuge**  
Saturday, October 10  
See page 2 for details.

## CALENDAR

We are working on events for the winter season. The attached calendar is a *draft* and might change as we firm up dates. Check our website for the latest news.

## M.O.ZONE - Seen Around the Strand

On 5/1/09 and 5/11/09 in the p.m. Richard Fagan, volunteer, saw 60 **swallowtail kites** off of both north and south sides of US-41 and just west of SR-29. On 5/16/09 Joseph Campanella, volunteer, saw a large Florida **black bear** drinking from a puddle on Janes Scenic Drive near Gate 7 (West Main).

On 6/1/09 Steve Houseknecht, Park Services Specialist, and Jill Waisley saw an adult healthy **River Otter** run from the Park Headquarters area into the Cypress to the South. On 6/9/09 Terrance Craig, Park Ranger, observed a 1.5-foot **cotton mouth** near Gate 2. On 6/13/09 Rick Cruz, volunteer, and Julie Cardenas saw a **bobcat** on JSD at Gate 12 area as well as 2 **bears**, a female and 1 cub, around K2. On 6/22/09 Steve Houseknecht saw a 10-inch long **Diamondback rattlesnake** along Prairie Canal. On 6/29/09 Ron Kotliar, volunteer, observed a **coyote** on US-41 near Bridge 57.

In late June and early July of 2009, Steve Houseknecht saw a **King Rail** off of JSD in the prairies and south of a Cypress Stand. On 7/1/09 Steve Houseknecht and Laura Skinner, Americorps member, saw a **black bear** on JSD between Gate 1 and Gate 7. On 7/7/09 in the late afternoon, Mike Owen, Park Biologist, identified a **striped crayfish snake** on JSD for some visitors. On 7/18/09 Renee Rau, Park Manager, and Rick Cruz observed approximately 4-foot **Diamondback rattlesnake** off of US-41 near the Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk.

On 8/3/09 in the afternoon Alicia Mumford, Park Ranger, observed a **Florida Panther** with a raccoon in its mouth off JSD approximately 2 miles from Gate 1. On 8/6/09 Laura Skinner observed a collared **Florida Panther** around Gate 18. On 9/2/09 Terrance Craig saw a **black bear** near Gate 7.

On 9/4/09 on a botanical expedition, Mike Owen, George Wilder, Botanist at Naples Botanical Gardens, and his assistant Jean Roche observed a **Great White heron**, a **King rail**, two **Limpkins**, and three **Eastern king birds** on their drive down JSD. On 9/13/09 Tom McDaniel, member of the Florida Trail Association, observed two **Florida panther kittens** about 20-30 pounds run down JSD drive near Gate 7 (see page 3). On 9/17/09 Mike Owen and Karen Relish, OPS Ranger, saw a **Black-throated Blue Warbler** eating insects in trees over East Main Tram near the cabin. On 9/24/09 on JSD Mike Owen and Alicia Mumford saw 2 **loggerhead shrikes**, 2 **mocking birds**, and 2 **hummingbirds** (near a firebush).

Mike told the *Ghost Writer* that the number of **Diamondback rattlesnakes** sighted in the Fakahatchee in 2008 and 2009 (at least 1 per month) is much greater than in previous years when they were rare. There is no apparent reason for this increase. He also said that **Burmese Pythons** have not been reported since 2007 but they are often hard to spot when they are curled up.

*If you would like to help type sightings into the Biologist's Excel database, please contact Mike at (239) 695-2886.*

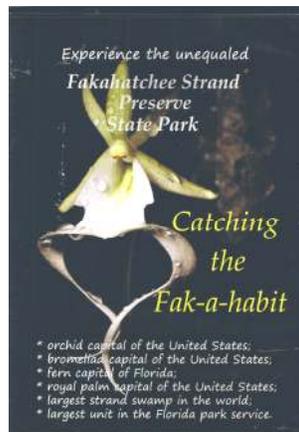
If you want to report sightings, contact Park biologist Mike Owen or his assistant Karen Relish by phone at (239) 695-2886.

Visit [www.friendsoffakahatchee.org](http://www.friendsoffakahatchee.org) for events, newsletters, colored tram map, history, and more.

## NEW DVD

reviewed by Marya Repko

FOF director and volunteer Jay Staton has produced a labor of love, a DVD showing the flora and fauna of the Fakahatchee. Some of the images were taken by motion-sensitive cameras that he placed strategically in the park to capture panthers, deer, and bears who would otherwise shy away from a human trying to take photos.



One Fakahatchee aficionado said it was “total emersion” and appreciated that most of the sound was natural (birds, water) rather than someone talking at her. A local swamp tromper told me she’d never seen some of the things so close up and recommended the DVD highly. A former resident emailed “It is such a wonderful DVD ... I will enjoy giving them as gifts.”

Copies are available from Jay who generously gives some of the profit to FOF. Phone him at (239) 298-0039 or email [jaystationphotography@comcast.net](mailto:jaystationphotography@comcast.net). The DVD is also for sale at the Everglades Area Chamber of Commerce Welcome Center (US-41 and SR-29).

## A Fakahatchee First! COASTAL CRUISE

The Friends are planning a boat tour of Fakahatchee Bay including Fakahatchee Island which was inhabited by a thriving community of farmers and fishermen at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It even had a school!

The cruise will include lectures about the flora & fauna of the area, as well as the history. A guided trip on the islands will explore what is left of civilization there including Native American shell mounds.

The trip is scheduled for **Saturday, November 21**, from the National Park in Everglades City. Final details are yet to be decided. More info will be posted on our website and announced in the November newsletter. If you have questions, phone Marya at (239) 695-2905.

## “Safari” into the Fakahatchee

The highlight of our winter season will be the “Fakahatchee Safari” on **Sunday, February 27**, with a full program of activities including swamp walks and food. We hope to attract visitors to this unique event and will begin publicizing it soon.

**This is the first issue of *The Ghost Writer* since the spring. We hope everyone had a great summer!**



Thanks to Mike Jerrard for sending this amazing photo of a panther and a bear which he took near K2 in July.

## VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Volunteers to help in projects that benefit the Park are encouraged to come along on the scheduled work days. These are the **SECOND SATURDAY** and **THIRD TUESDAY** of each month, beginning in November.

Most of the work is outdoors and includes exotics removal, path clearing, and verge clean-up. Park staff organize and supervise the work. Every hour that we contribute helps the Park so reporting our time, as well as giving it, is important.

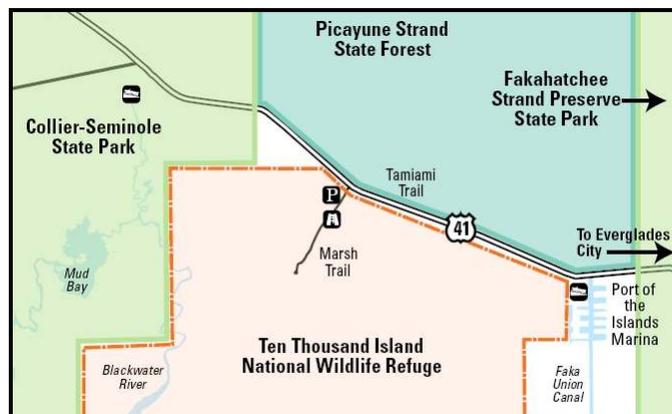
The schedule for the remainder of 2009 is:

Saturday, Nov 7 (extra day at Fakahatchee Island)

Saturday, Nov 14                      Tuesday, Nov 17

Saturday, Dec 12                      Tuesday, Dec 15

Dates are also posted on our website. For info and to sign up, phone Pam at (239) 695-1023 or Trevor at (239) 695-4593.



## MARSH TRAIL OPENING

The Ten Thousand Islands National Wildlife Refuge is holding the formal opening of the new parking lot and trail on US-41 on **Saturday, October 10**, at 10:00 a.m. Activities begin earlier in the morning with guided walks leaving from 7:15 a.m. onwards. Parking is at Port of the Islands from which a free shuttle takes visitors to the new area.

FOF will have a table with brochures and T-shirts. If you would like to help, phone Marya at (239) 695-2905.

## President's Message

The water is back in the Fakahatchee and big plans are being made for the coming season

I hope that you are aware of the PBS film "Big Cypress-The Western Everglades" It features many scenes in the Fakahatchee with members Capt. Franklin Adams and Rick Cruz and Park Biologist Mike Owen. The Friends' Board voted to help sponsor this film which will attract nationwide attention to the Fakahatchee, displaying all of its splendor. Although part of the Big Cypress eco-system, the Fakahatchee is unique in that it is the only Bald Cypress / Royal Palm Strand and the Orchid capital of the USA. For your friends who wonder about your Swamp Walks or even how to spell Fakahatchee – this video is a must. For more info and schedule, see [www.clydebutter.com](http://www.clydebutter.com).

The Friends have two new events planned.

A boat trip exploring the settlements of Fakahatchee Bay on Nov 21 will take you into areas not easily accessed. John Elting, past FOF president, has charted this trip and you will not be disappointed!

The Signature Event (code-named "Safari") is designed to introduce folks who are interested in outdoor Florida to the beauty of the Fakahatchee. This will be an afternoon-into-evening event with food, swamp walks, lectures, and swamp buggy rides. Our goal is to raise awareness of the Fakahatchee and funds for the Boardwalk. Elsa Caldwell is chair and she will need volunteers and team leaders. Please call the Friends at 239-695-1023 to help

Note that Board meetings and the Welcome Back Dinner will be held at the Port of the Islands in November and December

John Elting has added an additional Swamp Walk on the last Wednesday of each month.

Canoe Trips are scheduled, but a new Leader is needed. If you can help in leading or being safety second please give me a call at 239-992-5963 and leave a message.

*All the Best,  
Tom Maish*

There are several local chapters of the Florida Trail Association in Southern Florida that have regular hikes, workdays, and meetings. To find the one nearest you, see [www.floridatrail.org](http://www.floridatrail.org).

**"Protecting Paradise: Collier County Conservation"**  
This program from the local PBS station WGPU-TV is available on DVD from [www.wgcu.org](http://www.wgcu.org) or from the Museum of the Everglades at [www.evergladesmuseum.org](http://www.evergladesmuseum.org) (click on Gift Shop).

Local residents are worried about development near Fisheating Creek. For info, see [www.saveourcreeks.org](http://www.saveourcreeks.org).

The North American Nature Photography Association have several useful documents on their website [www.nanpa.org](http://www.nanpa.org).

## CSO Meeting Report

Fakahatchee was well-represented at the Florida Park Service meetings in Orlando at the end of September. Renee Rau attended the managers' meeting while Tom Maish and Dennis Giardina represented FOF at sessions for CSOs (Citizens' Support Organizations).

In fact, Fakahatchee made quite a hit with the new display panel designed by Glen Stacell and a laptop running Jay Staton's "Fak-a-habit" DVD. We were the only park to have a table set up and "were the envy of all the other CSOs" according to Tom Maish.

Good news from discussions at the meetings is that the Park Service is in favor of our plans to rebuild the Boardwalk and add a Visitors' Center. We were encouraged to submit a Partnership-in-Parks grant request.

Some of the topics of conversation among CSOs were social networking websites (Flickr, Facebook) and the use of PayPal which FOF is currently considering for membership and merchandise sales on its website.

All in all, according to Tom, "it was a quite interesting, valuable and worth the trip."

## PANTHER SIGHTING

by Tom McDaniel

On Sunday afternoon, September 19, at about 1:45 PM, I was driving slowly south-bound on Jane's Scenic Drive between Gates 7 and 9, when two young panther cubs ran out onto the road from the west side. The two cubs were playing, with one chasing the other as they darted into the road about 100 feet ahead of me. They ran up the road ahead of me about 30-40 feet before seeing me and running back into the bush. I stopped the car where they went into the bush and there were ripples in the water where they ran or swam away. I turn off the car engine and listened and heard one of the cubs calling for its mother. I also heard a slow plopping of something walking through the water nearby, maybe the mother?

They were beyond the kitten stage and had long gangly legs which seemed to be too long for their body. They were definitely young panthers with long thick tails and big feet. The event happened so quickly that, I didn't get any photos.

After visiting the FAK for over 12 years, I have never even seen a Panther much less two Panther cubs. The Fakahatchee is an amazing place.

## NEW FOF SCHOLARSHIP

The Friends are offering a scholarship to seniors in high schools in Collier County. Students should apply by April 1 and must have done some volunteer work in the Fakahatchee. More info is available on our website.



**MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

We have 269 members. Renewal notices for the 4th quarter are being sent with this newsletter.

**Welcome to new members:**

- John & Flo Ann Easton, Naples
- Mike Greenslit, Douglas, MA
- Rod Hunt, Chiefland
- Caroline Plechac, Hollywood
- Shurr Adventures, Everglades City
- Paul Veltman, Grand Rapids, MI

**BOARD MEETING**

The first Board Meeting since the summer break will be held on **Sunday, November 8**, at Port of the Islands (US-41 about 11 miles west of SR-29). Coffee will be served at 10:00 a.m. prior to the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

Among other business, the Board will consider an amendment to the FOF By-Laws to allow the Board to vote by email, fax, telephone, or post (see exact wording in the attached notice).

**What Do You Remember?**

Local historian Marya Repko is working on a "History of the Fakahatchee" including the islands, logging, Gulf American, and the fight to save the Fakahatchee. Please let her know what you remember by phone at (239) 695-2905 or email [mrepko@earthlink.net](mailto:mrepko@earthlink.net).



Fakahatchee biologist Mike Owen was thrilled with the new computer equipment donated over the summer by the Friends for his use. This is just one example of how FOF helps the park.

**NEW T-SHIRTS & CAPS**

The Friends have new T-shirts and hats for sale in different colors. An order form is available on our website.



**What Are We? Who Are We?**

The **Friends of Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve, Inc.**, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, is the Citizen Support Organization of Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, the largest cypress strand in the world and the deepest slough in the greater Everglades. Its 80,000 acres are bordered by I-75 (Alligator Alley), US-41 (Tamiami Trail), SR-29, Fakahatchee Bay, and Picayune State Forest.

*The mission of the Friends of Fakahatchee is to aid in the preservation of this ecologically unique area and to educate the public about its importance.*

*The Ghost Writer*, named after the endangered Ghost Orchid which blooms in the Preserve, is edited by Marya Repko with contributions from members and friends. It is issued at least six times a year and has an average circulation of over 300 copies.

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|-----------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| OFFICERS: | President – Tom Maish       | Vice-President – Dennis Giardina |               |                 |               |
|           | Secretary – Susan O’Farrell | Treasurer – Vicky Nagle          |               |                 |               |
| BOARD:    | Allen Caldwell              | Elsa Caldwell                    | Saul Friess   | Dennis Giardina | Tom Maish     |
|           | Susan O’Farrell             | David Shindle                    | Glenn Stacell | Jay Staton      | Carol Swingle |

**NEW ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP**

date \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to "FOF" and send to: *FOF Membership, P.O.Box 35, Everglades City, FL, 34139*

Individual (\$20)  Family (\$30)  Business (\$50)  Patron (\$100)  Benefactor (\$500)  extra (\$\_\_\_\_\_)

Youth (\$10) birth date: month \_\_\_\_\_ day \_\_\_\_\_ year \_\_\_\_\_ (members under 18 years old must select this)

NAME _____	EMAIL _____
STREET / P.O.BOX: _____	<u>ALTERNATE ADDRESS</u> _____
CITY _____	CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP _____	STATE _____ ZIP _____
PHONE _____	PHONE _____

**MONTHS AT ALTERNATE ADDRESS:**

JAN  FEB  MAR  APR  MAY  JUN  JUL  AUG  SEP  OCT  NOV  DEC